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ABSTRACT

In this thematic issue, articles focus on the use of phase electives in the English classroom. Discussions include "Death in the Classroom," "Soapbox Operas in the English Classroom," "Language and History in Phase-Selective Programs," "Phase Electives and the Problem of Composition," and "Phase Electives and College Preparation." "Phase Electives Are in Trouble," "The Best of Both Worlds: Basics and Electives," and "A Student Opinionnaire to Assess Attitudes toward the English Phase Elective Curriculum" provide additional commentary. Descriptions of filmstrip sets for use in humanities minicourses are listed according to their appropriateness for elementary-level and secondary-level students. Poems by Elmer Brooks and Howard Waltersdorf and the request by the NCTE Committee on Censorship for information concerning acts of censorship in the schools complete the issue. (KS)

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Focus on Phase Electives

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Death in the Classroom

Initial reaction—"How gruesome! How morbid!" End reaction—"How glad I am I took the course. How beautiful!" Thus it was that DEATH—a subject which has long been a taboo for discussion in American society—became a phase-elective course the spring semester of 1975 at Danville Community High School.

For six-week periods, almost 200 students (one-third of the school) actively participated in a discussion-dialogue class called "Perspectives on Death."

Using the text *On Death and Dying* by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Mrs. Lucinda Maron and Mrs. Judith Blough introduced the course into the six-week phase elective program for the first time.

"It was a pioneering experience in thought and communication between students and the teachers as well as students and other students," Mrs. Blough said. Mrs. Maron also cited the excellent opportunity for people to share ideas and attitudes about a subject few people talk about.

One student called the course "six weeks of understanding." For most the communicating with others was the highlight of the time—an opportunity to search their own thoughts and to discover those of other people.

Topics such as "Fear of Death," "Attitudes Toward Death and Dying," and the "Five Stages of the Terminally Ill Patient" (found in the textbook) were used to begin class discussion and to cultivate student awareness.

Doctors became guest "teachers," as did psychologists, and visited individual classes, sharing with students their professional views as well as personal approaches and procedures used to advise patients and their families. Suicide came into this discussion.

During the next week ministers of various denominations came to the classrooms, and students learned of and discussed views and attitudes on the counseling aspects of the patient and his family.

Each step of the course encouraged dialogue and expression from each student. This was one of the most important aspects of the course and the one noted the most on student evaluation reports.

The fifth week was the discussion of the "funeral" aspects of death. A visit to a local funeral home was provided for all classes. Funeral directors met the classes in the chapel and took them through the steps of planning a funeral, preparation of the deceased, and acquainted them with the role of the funeral director in guiding the family of the dead person. Students

viewed the embalming room, casket displays, clothes and vault selection rooms as well as the chapel.

Visiting the town cemetery, viewing the inside of a mausoleum, and discussing tombstone architecture throughout the ages concluded the final aspect of the course.

In addition to participating in open discussions after each visit and speaker, each student wrote reaction papers and did special projects. These projects ranged from writing original poetry on a personal philosophy of death to planning one's own funeral.

Student reaction to the course was positive. One girl wrote, "This course has strengthened my understanding of death relating to a Christian atmosphere." A senior boy stated that "A few parents and students were probably upset by the idea of a class on death, but the positive views presented in class more than qualify the class for the high school level." Several students indicated their parents participated in the course through discussions which took place at home. These parents also responded positively.

Noteworthy examples of student reaction came from two girls—one a junior and the other a senior. The visit to the embalming room at the funeral home had been a little more than the junior was prepared for, and she fainted, but her reaction paper, which was written at the end of the course and after the death of her grandmother, said, in part: "This course really prepared me for the funeral. . . . Many of my relatives began and carry on. I knew the right things to say which I learned from them. . . . I'm glad I went to the embalming room now. I know I am ready."

The senior was hesitant about going into the course after the loss of her grandmother and she wrote: "I considered trying to switch classes because I thought I would be very emotional all the time. There were a few times it was a little hard, but I needed them. It was better to go through this with all these people and sometimes be able to laugh. I'm glad I took it and know for sure it has helped."

Others also had to face a death while taking or immediately after taking the course and found that the frank discussion prevalent throughout the class gave them great assistance in facing a trying time.

The teachers felt strongly that the course was justified in the English curriculum since literature throughout all time has dealt with death; therefore, the literature teacher is indeed well qualified to acquaint students with the theme of death in an elective program.

The course proved itself a success at Danville and triumphed over any objections raised by parents or the community. Indeed, at its conclusion it was praised by parents as well as students.

Soapbox Operas in the English Classroom

Will Jennifer find happiness with Philip? Will David divorce Norma and remarry Adrienne? Can Jeraldine overcome her illness and continue the search for her lost daughter? These questions should sound familiar to day-time television viewers, for the three major television broadcasting companies have produced for many years during weekday hours highly successful dramas endearingly called soapbox operas.

The two newest dramas, "Ryan's Hope" and "The Young and the Restless," now join such old favorites as "Somerset," "Search for Tomorrow," "All My Children," "As the World Turns," "Love of Life," "The Doctors," and "The Guiding Light." On "Days of Our Lives" and "Another World" the 30-minute format has been extended to 60-minutes to the delight of millions of viewing homemakers, shut-ins, factory shift workers, retired persons, and just plain soapbox opera fans. While women comprise the vast majority of viewers, more and more men are getting hooked on the operas which represent some of the finest acting, directing, writing, costuming, and set designing in the theatrical business.

In several Central Pennsylvania school districts, English and communication arts classroom teachers involved in phased elective programming have successfully used the daytime dramas as important resources within the course. For example, in one particular phased elective titled "Fictional Females," a selected opera provided inclass continuous analysis of female character development. Another course offering titled "Contemporary Drama" used on occasion videotaped drama segments to study the complexities and dimensions of the live stage performance. In yet another elective program, the English teacher coordinating a course titled "Techniques of Acting and Directing," used selected inclass dramas aired during the actual class period to observe and discuss various techniques and approaches.

On December 4, 1950, television's first soapbox opera, "The First Hundred Years," went on the air. For many years, daytime dramas had the reputation of being slow moving, meaningless, and gossipy flashes sandwiched in between seemingly endless commercial announcements. Daytime dramas have come a long way since those early days. Today operas candidly and accurately investigate and reflect contemporary societal problems which are often considered taboo by other forms of media and communication. Social restoration, controversy, and conflict highlight the daily plots

viewed by millions of faithful and captive audiences. The wide range of stories include such diverse topics as child abuse, parent-child relations, ecology, death, marriage, abortion, sexual attitudes and lifestyles, the problems of the elderly, adolescent peer group pressures, drug abuse, alcoholism, and medical malpractice. The daytime drama has a greater potential for influencing public opinion than most television documentaries and specials. The dramas open many new resources for the English, drama, and language arts teacher. This unique form of daytime school hour entertainment offers the creative and searching high school educator a refreshing and viable alternative to classroom instruction and learning.

Will the daytime drama become an integral component in your phased elective course offering when applicable? Tune in tomorrow and see!

Friday

There is something special

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—Howard Waltersdorf

Language and History In Phase-Elective Programs

For those teachers who are seeking more traditional subject matter in English to incorporate into phase-elective programs, I would like to suggest a course in the History of the English Language. This aspect of language study has been curiously neglected in many of the current programs, and one can only speculate on the reasons why. Obviously, some teachers themselves have never been exposed to the historical study of English and are therefore not in a position to transmit the information to their students with any kind of enthusiasm, while others may have been subjected to some dismal experiences themselves, struggling to commit to memory such things as the seven classes of strong verbs in Old English and are thus not receptive to the idea that language history can be a rewarding study. Or the feeling may simply be that language history is old hat—that there is nothing to be gained by the contemporary student in going over old ground. Whatever the reasons for the paucity of language history courses, the fact remains that a well conceived course can provide students with exciting and invaluable information about the nature of the English language. And in the process, it can also act as a corrective to certain attitudes toward language that are prevalent today.

Before getting into the long range benefits to be derived from the historical study of language, let me briefly outline a classroom approach that is doomed to failure right from the start, an approach that is a common one readily fallen into, one that should be avoided like the plague. All histories of the language that I am familiar with trace the development of the language from Old English through Middle English and Early Modern English on up. What the textbook writers have done is amass a great deal of information about the language in different ages and then made generalizations on the basis of that information. These generalizations tell us about such things as weak and strong adjectives and verbs, the declension of Old English nouns, and so forth, and they are presented in a formal, abstract way. If the teacher resorts to, and worse, relies upon her graduate notes and her standard history of the language text and the traditional chronological order of presentation, offering the material in just that fashion, student interest is likely to dissipate very rapidly, discouraging even the better students in the process. Even if the material were watered down considerably, the results would be the same as students became bored to tears with paradigms to be memorized and workbook exercises to be completed.

To prevent student lethargy from setting in, we would first need to reverse the order of presentation of the material—to know what the generalizations are as they are presented in the textbooks and to work from them to seek ways in which the students might discover for themselves, by examining documents and actual speech, what a rich and varied experience language is. By discovering that the French term *armee* won out over native forms *here* and *fyrđ*, that while *finalize* is still considered to be a no-no *normalize* is perfectly acceptable, and that there are variant pronunciations of *roof*, students are in a better position to judge for themselves what is acceptable when innovation confronts convention in the language. For it is in this area where innovation and convention collide that the greatest controversy occurs, and a historical study of the language enables us to guard against the rejection of some new form for the wrong reason.

A simple way to generate and to maintain student interest, then, is to base the course upon some major idea like the notion of change in continuity that permeates the language. Continuity may be demonstrated by showing that English is a Germanic language and that it shares some common features, among them an inflected two tense verb system, the development of weak verbs, the fixing of stress as near to the root syllable as possible, and a vocabulary peculiar to Germanic languages. Practically everyone is aware of the Latin and French influences upon the vocabulary. It would be easy simply to tell the kids about this influence and, perhaps, show a few examples, but how much better if they would discover the information for themselves. A situation may be created in which the students are asked to compile a list of words in English that they think are absolutely essential to anyone just learning English. The list should be large enough for a representative sample so that the entries may be collated, categorized, and divided among the students to trace the etymologies to see if there is a word stock which is Germanic in origin. Then the borrowed elements could be introduced to see what areas of activities they represent. All kinds of information about the relationship between language and society can be gained here.

For the sounds, a passage of Biblical material in Old English is always available to use since students can be expected to know some of the traditional passages. Matthew 6:9-13 is a good one. By using the same passage as it was written in other periods, it should be easy to demonstrate that there is not so much a loss or addition of sounds from Old English to Modern English (although both occur) as it was a rearrangement of existing items.¹

Similarly with syntax. Students can determine which order of words are acceptable and therefore grammatical, which are not, and which are marginal. Here some knowledge of the sentence structure of Middle and Early Modern English is useful to illustrate what was once possible. How would they judge the question, "Rides the teacher to work today?" Approaching syntax in this fashion is infinitely more interesting, informative, and rewarding than the usual practice of teaching sentence agreement *everyone/his* where a mixed audience is being referred to. There are all

kinds of goodies here. Some of the possibilities open to them are: his, her, their, one, his/her, her/his, a person, s/her, or some new form. Suppose they opt for the his/her solution. The mind boggles at the prospect of what can happen if the sex is not apparent, to wit: A teacher, if he or she is committed, will not permit his or her representative to take action on any proposal which is not in his or her interest unless he or she makes his or her wish known through prior consultation. Yet correction of this stylistic problem is minor compared to the monumental job of getting the public to agree on some new form.

Switching to another area, what would the students do with *man-hours*, *manning* the barricades, and the expression that the secondary schools are *manned* primarily by women? The implications for language study are enormous here. When *man* is used as a suffix, it is fairly easy to substitute *woman* as in *chairman/chairwoman*. But when *man* is the first part of the compound, things get stickier. For example, we could speak of *person-hours*, schools are *peopled/personed* by women, and even *peopling/personing* the barricades. But how would they handle *man* when it is part of the word and carries a connotation of sex derived through folk etymology as in *manárake*? Or if there is the sense of sex present but none etymologically as in *manual*? In addition to trying to resolve these problems, students should be in the position to determine why they arose in the first place.

Other areas of concern today lend themselves to historical investigation, although some may be a bit more difficult to trace. Doublespeak patterns SVO, VSO, etc. in isolation.

Change in continuity may be illustrated in another way by relating language to its cultural context. It is roughly in the sixteenth century that a new scope in language emerges—conscious attitudes toward language, or what is proper usage. What gave rise to it? What were the effects? One consequence is still with us and looms very large in the society. It produced a population of Americans speaking English who are extremely uptight when circumstances force them to use language in an unfamiliar environment, namely where teachers of English are present. The concept of proper English only serves to reinforce the feeling of linguistic inferiority.

One can illustrate the ephemeral nature of proper English very easily by making a list of pet peeves or by selecting some of them from old handbooks of English² like the distinction between *shall* and *will* or *like* as a conjunction. How many would object to the use of *fix* in the sense of repair? How many *raise* instead of *rear* children? To parents, the choice seems academic these days. Although it is folly to insist upon the retention of these older forms, many people still do; and worse, they try to impose their preferences upon others in the name of "good English."

Since change is going on all around us and people are threatened by change, the students ought to set up their own Academy for the Preservation of Good English to see what happens when they try to legislate forms. For openers, an item that is currently in the forefront in certain circles can be

used. Gender is natural rather than grammatical in English, so students wrestling with the current problem of pronoun-antecedent is surely not a modern phenomenon. Yet I suspect that too much historical and cultural background is necessary to determine its use in previous ages. The language of prejudice, however, should be much easier to track down, from the relatively obvious racial names, to colors, to the more subtle forms of language that have provided the power for one group to maintain its hold over another.

By getting students involved in these kinds of investigations, we will receive a more positive reaction from them than the usual [yæx] when language study is mentioned. We will provide students with material, opportunities, and problems which will stimulate their interest by challenging them, providing them with the long range benefits of more confidence and more tolerance in their use of language acquired through the knowledge of how the same instrument served other people in other times as well as it serves them now. There is nothing like the discovery that Chaucer and Malory, premiere writers of their times, could use double and triple negatives without having the language fall apart at the seams. Nor was the millennium reached in the eighteenth century when it was determined that double negatives were bad form logically.

In addition, since we as teachers have not been very successful in changing the language behavior of countless students to conform to our specific notions of what is proper English (cloak-room English, I like to call it), we might take a crack at changing the attitudes toward language that people have that make it an instrument of snobbery for some and unconcern for many. An historical study of English is one small step in that direction.

NOTES

¹The low front vowel [æ] in Old English disappears in Middle English, only to return in Early Modern English.

²See, for example, George Lyman Kittredge and Frank Edgar Farley, *An Advanced English Grammar* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1913), pp. 102-105: "In military orders and official communications, custom permits the more courteous *will* in the place of *shall* in the second and third persons."

Phase Electives and the Problem of Composition

The teaching of English seldom impinges on the public consciousness. Thus when *Newsweek* gave cover story status to the question "Why Johnny Can't Write" (8 December 1975, pp. 58-65), English teachers found themselves in a position usually occupied only by more public figures. But the problem which the article addressed is not a new one. At least college teachers have spoken for several years about the need to reintroduce remedial composition sections, and the professional journals have devoted considerable space to discussion of the composition problems of our students. In general, the *Newsweek* article offers the same explanations as the professional discussions, concluding that students write badly because teachers, under the pernicious influence of the permissiveness fostered by structural linguistics and "the simplistic spoken style of television" to name but two, are neglecting time honored basic truths and so are not teaching as well as they ought. I do not wish to argue the merit of the *Newsweek* arguments. Rather I would like to suggest that many students cannot write well enough to be college freshmen, not because they have been badly taught, but because they have not been taught writing at all. And, in many cases, this neglect of writing has followed the introduction of phase elective curricular programs.

While there is no reason, *a priori*, to claim a relation between composition problems and phase elective programs, I think the claim is amply motivated by recent experience. Several years ago, the English faculty at Vassar College began the freshman English course by asking the students to write an essay describing their secondary school experience of English. Among other things, we wanted to know how much writing they had done, and what kinds. As recently as the fall of 1970, those first papers were unremarkable. Freshman students all seemed to have written between 20 and 25 papers a year, in a variety of expository and creative modes. There were few surprises in those papers. Then, in 1971 that changed. That year, as I read through my 40 or so papers, I found that a few students claimed to have written no formal, expository prose at all. Several had written only one or two or three such papers a year, and many had only written 20 or 25 during their entire high school career. Only a small number of students had written what I considered a normal amount.

My initial reaction to this information was that I had two very eccentric sections, but when I complained of that in a staff meeting, I found

that my sections closely resembled most of the others. We later found, at regional meetings, that our college was not unique. During the next two years, the situation got a bit worse—that is, more students had done less writing. When I came to Purdue, I still thought that I had been dealing with a regional phenomenon. However that appears not to be the case. The percentages differ here, but there are still many students who have done only a very small amount of formal writing in English classes.

What makes that a matter of interest, to me at least, is that when I have discussed with the students their English backgrounds, one fact emerges. Those with little writing experience almost always come from "good" schools which have introduced some kind of phase elective program. Those whose writing background most closely matches the norm of six years ago come from schools, often smaller ones, which have more traditional curricula. Of course, that is not true in every case, but phase elective programs which allow students not to take writing courses figure in such a large majority of these explanations that I cannot believe the connection to be purely accidental.

No doubt a phase elective program can be altered to take care of that kind of problem; we can always require a certain number of writing courses. But that gives rise to another problem. At least since the 1959 Woods Hole Conference of science teachers, educational theorists have stressed the importance of the structure of a discipline, arguing that isolated information only takes on significance in the context of a larger pattern. The diversity of English makes it hard to talk about the structure of the discipline, but structure is no less important in English than in science. It should be obvious, for instance, that for a student to become a good writer, he must not only practice writing but he must also learn to recognize and appreciate good writing. That appreciation, in turn, results from the student's recognition that there is a continuity between the rhetorical problems he faces and those which any accomplished novelist or dramatist faces and his recognition of the range of solutions that other writers have found. A curricular structure which treats the aspects of English separately does not render that impossible, but it does appear to reduce the chances that the student will make the connections in any useful way. Probably that is due to the fact that structure is an elusive quality which cannot simply be asserted but must be embodied in the course we teach.

The problem that all of this poses for the English teacher is made the more complex since the traditional composition course has received well-deserved criticism recently for its lack of flexibility and its lack of connection with the real world as the student knows it and since some of the activities which students are doing instead of composition (e.g., film-making and creative multi-media projects) have great merit. Perhaps, though, what we ought to say about these alternatives to composition is that they have merit when they complement more traditional writing. For I think we all recognize the difference between having an idea and being able to express it

clearly and appropriately. While the experience of writing may be somewhat artificial, that is, it seems defensible to say that writing imposes informing constraints on our thought which no other process duplicates in practice.

In any case, I do not raise these reservations about phase elective programs because I oppose the values of those programs. English curricula, at least, need the flexibility and the imagination that come with phase electives. But the planners of English curricula need, at least as much, not to neglect the matters of content and form to which these remarks call attention.

In Memory of Thomas Hardy, Poet

If Hardy were alive today

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—Howard Waltersdorf

Phase Electives and College Preparation

Since its introduction several years ago, the phase elective English curriculum has been widely adopted in secondary schools. Nearly two-thirds of college freshmen now graduate from high schools which offer some form of phase elective program. Phase electives were created largely, if not totally, for the purpose of broadening course options and providing for ability and interest differences among non-college preparatory students; in this capacity, they appear to have admirably succeeded. Probably no other recent innovation in English curriculum can claim greater success in providing the pragmatic optimum of as much as possible for as many as possible. There is a danger, however, in this concentration of attention on the lower ability student that college-bound men or women may be even less prepared for the study of college English than their predecessors have been. There are a number of factors in current phase elective structures that contribute to this condition.

First, college freshman English, while varying from school to school, is still largely composition oriented. Considering the recent unfavorable publicity given in the national media to the writing inability of young Americans, notably the December 8, 1975, *Newsweek* cover story on "Why Johnny Can't Write," it is incumbent on secondary schools to emphasize this aspect of English for all students, but most especially for those who are going to attend college. In phase electives, unfortunately, composition is likely to be even more neglected than under traditional curricula. Phase electives are top-heavy with literature courses; in most schools, the ratio of literature/reading courses to composition/writing courses is about six to one. Nor are the writing courses uniformly college preparatory; many college freshmen indicate that their composition background was obtained in creative writing or letter writing courses which, while serving in a uniquely specialized fashion, do not represent the best possible preparation for formal composition in college. Although some colleges and universities have themselves been moving away from rigorous writing requirements for students, the majority of them have retained such standards, and virtually every survey of potential employers of college graduates, as well as the public at large, shows that such writing is still regarded as a measure of the truly educated person and as a gauge to employability.

The imbalance in favor of literature is symptomatic of a second factor contributing to the potential danger of phase electives in college preparation: teachers overwhelmingly prefer teaching literature to composition,

and departments have created elective curricula which reflect this bias. Unless an elective course is explicitly designated as composition, literature will inevitably receive the majority of the time and emphasis. This problem is particularly serious in schools which claim, as some do, that each course offers an "integrated" and equal degree of importance to both literature and composition. In reality, these courses, even at high phase levels, are literature courses in which perfunctory writing is done; composition is not taught in any formal, rhetorical sense. English teachers at all levels, including college, believe, with some accuracy, that composition is outside their expertise since, even at the undergraduate teacher training level, their own educations contained minimal composition study. Thus, teachers consistently argue that they do not "enjoy" teaching composition, that their students are hostile or resistant to it, and that it creates undesirable work loads through the quantity of theme grading necessitated by it.

A further complication is a byproduct of misconceptions about the efficacy of literature in preparing for college English. Although some educators might argue the point, literature study is virtually irrelevant to freshman English; the only students for whom this is not true are the fast decreasing number who major or minor in the field. For the typical freshman, it makes little difference whether his background consisted of British and American literature or of best sellers and science fiction, but an attitude to the contrary is widely held by instructors. The *Newsweek* article previously cited asserts that professors believe that poor writing is, in part, a result of "secondary-school curriculums that no longer require the wide range of reading a student must have if he is to learn to write clearly." In fact, students probably read more widely in phase electives than ever before, although they may not read the literary "classics" which the professors surely had in mind, but, regardless, there is no evidence that students write more clearly or correctly as a result of reading. College entrance examinations typically measure neither breadth of reading nor writing skill. What they do measure is exactly that which the student might acquire through reading: a larger workable vocabulary and greater verbal comprehension. A student learns to write by careful guidance and frequent practice in writing itself, not by reading or grammar study, yet this is the truism that is most often overlooked by educators. Even freshmen who took a high school course designed as preparation for college composition—and many freshmen have had no such course—indicate that they wrote an average of about five papers in a semester, a distinct contrast to the almost one-a-week theme writing pace of most college courses. When freshmen say, as they often do when confronted with introductory composition material, that they wrote seldom or never in high school, they are often distressingly correct.

The lack of writing background is often compounded by the fact that in over half the high schools with a phase elective curriculum students are free to choose courses independent of teacher or counselor recommendations; faculty members may advise students, but they exercise no veto over student choices nor are there departmentally required courses for students at

specified phase levels. As a result, students are able to avoid composition courses if they choose to do so, and freshmen admit that they often exercised this option. They chose to elect less rigorous low phase literature courses which were attractive because of the easy reading and the relative lack of academic competition. In addition, a significant number of students are permitted to substitute public speaking, drama, or journalism courses for English electives; while these areas are of undoubted merit in their specialized ways, they are undesirable as the whole, or even as the major part, of a student's preparation for college English.

If society persists in regarding writing skill as one of the visible signs of the well-educated person—and there is every reason to believe that this will be the case in the foreseeable future—and if phase electives become an even more common form of high school English curriculum than at present, then a few minor revisions should be made which would insure that students would come to college with adequate writing skills.

At the secondary level, despite the current pre-occupation with career training, terminal skills, and relevancy in education, the task of preparing students for college cannot and must not be minimized. Specifically, secondary schools must see to it that college-bound students enroll in composition courses designed, as much as possible, to anticipate freshman English. However distasteful the job of teaching composition may be to high school teachers, departments must insist that composition be an integral part of the English background of such students. This implies that schools should probably exercise greater discretionary control over student course selection; allowing students total freedom in choosing classes is certainly democratic, and undoubtedly creates a more positive attitude on the part of students toward their courses, but it may not be, ultimately, in their best interest to continue such a practice. Teachers and counselors must be aware of what colleges are expecting of freshmen in English and should have better knowledge than students do of how best to prepare for it; educators who fail in this responsibility are culpable for some of their students' later deficiencies in writing.

Finally, colleges have a reciprocal obligation to the secondary schools. Higher education must maintain cognizance of new developments in secondary education, including such curriculum modifications as phase electives. Although literature-oriented Ph.D.s often strongly object to it, this commitment includes programs which specifically prepare prospective English teachers for employment in the diverse high school curricula that they are likely to encounter, and it certainly should entail preparation of a currently non-existent form of English teacher: the composition specialist who is trained in that field and who, more important, wants to teach it.

Phase electives, however efficacious they may be for non-college preparatory students, must be viewed presently with some skepticism as vehicles to higher education. But the problems leading to this conclusion are not inherent in the curriculum structure and, with a minimum of revision of existing practices, these programs can be made to serve the high phase, high academic student equally as well as others.

Phase Electives are in Trouble

A proliferation of English courses in which teachers teach whatever they like to teach and students choose whatever they like to learn has produced too many high school graduates who have never seen the classics and who move through whole semesters without any systematic training in language skills. Traditionalists gloat, "See, I told you so. Let's get back to the basics and abandon electives." Parents who themselves never read Shakespeare and avoid seeing any plays by the Bard profess themselves horrified to discover that their children can complete high school without ever studying a Shakespeare play.

In the fifties, strongly influenced by the "new critics," college teachers of English who liked to analyze literature turned out school teachers who were convinced it was their mission to become textual critics and to make their high school students into experts in literary analysis. The writer's life and thought and what the reader felt were called "fallacies." Attention was riveted on what appeared on the page.

But it didn't work. Polls found that students disliked English more than any other subject. And the classics were anathema. One of my more sophisticated juniors confided that Hester Prynne got an "A" for what a girl would get a "C" for these days. The attempt to make every student look at literature the way elite scholars looked at it was a failure. For the majority, it eventuated in alienation from reading. Advanced students enriched the publishers of pat little publications called "Cliff Notes," which told them what they were supposed to think about what they were reading. Students who were unable to cope with the language of the classics were deprived of contact with the great old stories and characters of literature. It was not intellectually respectable to tell the old stories in abridged form or in paraphrased versions, but we ignored the fact that, for many readers, foreign language texts could become accessible in no other way, yet these were considered respectable.

The siren call to "relevance" rang out, and "choice" was the answer. In the late sixties and early seventies, there was a rush to locate "adolescent" literature. Lists of "relevant" selections filled library shelves and textbooks. Paperbacks added variety.

The elective system was seized as a panacea for bored English students. Teachers who did not want to use certain materials could avoid them and still "teach English." Students could get enough credits to graduate without

having to read materials they found unappetizing. Teachers could stop trying to attract students to literature which they themselves would never have read had they not been compelled to do so to pass English courses required for certification. Classics were reserved for small groups of elite students because we still could not face using abridgements, although we knew that archaic language and the conventional language of certain ages such as the Victorian made many fine stories and characters inaccessible to young readers. Teachers chose to teach phases of literature they liked best—which usually turned out to have titles like “The Mystery Story” or “Science Fiction.” Teachers, who did not like to write, did little writing, and did not write well themselves could teach a whole semester without assigning any serious writing.

Some teacher-planned electives received very little review by anyone but themselves. Seldom was a rationale provided for the sequence of materials. Some plans listed no objectives. Some objectives that were listed were unrelated to proposed evaluations. Objective evaluations of materials and the achievements of students were rare.

Now that the disquieting message has reached us from public and parents that high school students are not learning, that basic skills and the classical heritage are neglected, what shall we do about this growing discontent with English courses?

There are several things we should not do. We should not abandon the elective system and try to teach every child to diagram sentences and read *King Lear*. We should not abandon useful lists of readable materials that fill our libraries. Nor should we downgrade current titles and lose credibility with students by talking about books that bore them as “better” books. We should give up neither textual analysis, where it is appropriate, nor should we fail to encourage students to look at literature in whatever other way they find most revealing.

But there are things we should do. We need to search for answers to the many questions we have discovered in our teaching of English in the last two decades. How can we bring all the good ways we know to teach English into focus in a real program of skill upgrading and getting kids to read, understand and enjoy many kinds of literature? How can we rigorously review the electives we teach? Do we have some real objectives, as opposed to the ones we sometimes write on the first page of a course plan because the curriculum committee tells us we have to have them? What do we really want to happen to students as a result of their elective course? How do we tie everything in an elective course to rational purposes? How do we monitor results and continually upgrade methods, materials, and plans so that we do a better and better job of achieving our objectives?

If children of several different levels of ability and several different kinds of interests take a course, as happens in many electives, do we have a variety of materials and methods to individualize and challenge ability at each level? Or do we try to use the elective as a strain-out process, duplicating now-out-moded and, in many cases, illegal, homogeneous grouping? If

we need to sharpen and upgrade our own teaching skills so that we can individualize learning, do we retrain ourselves?

Do we use the infusion system to give each course a component of classical literature and basic skills? In every context, every day, does every student read, write, speak, and listen? Do we moan and groan over marking chores, or have we seen the importance of teaching students to read and respond to each other's work and to comment on it in creative and encouraging ways?

Do we quit trying to find the one best system to teach literature, whether by textual criticism or relevance and teach it in every way, to every child, so that each will have a cognitive kit as full of ways of looking at the written word as can be accumulated?

Are we honestly facing up to the obligation of developing our own taste and skills? Do we write for students so that they see we like to write, that we can and do write well? Do we keep our writing skills sharp by writing for our own purposes—or even just for practice? Do we read any and all kinds of literature, including an occasional classic we might not have read or one we have not looked at for many years? If we lecture, do we plan what we will say and make it a stylish presentation, entertaining, attractive, and informative? Do we cultivate our own critical and appreciative listening skills? We need to take professional stock of ourselves from time to time. It may be possible to improve what our students do by improving what we are able to do and what we typically do. If we do not have polished language skills, should we expect our students to have them? Is it old-fashioned to be scholar models?

Perhaps school systems and departments of English should develop methods collections like the Wisconsin Design methods folders for teachers of reading. A folder accumulates devices for teaching each of the dozens of reading skills identified in the program. This could be done for many of the classics. In the heyday of textual analysis, each paperback classic had lists of questions whose answers were designed to lead to a classic deeper understanding. For students who have or can achieve cognitive skills necessary to deal with this approach, these questions are useful. Students for whom relevance is all need other approaches.

We must accept responsibility for establishing rather than assuming the legitimacy of electives. Some are great successes. In most schools "The Bible as Literature" is popular. Have we thought its popularity due to our teaching excellence or to inherent course value? Should we, rather, modestly credit the appeal of local piety and desire to identify with traditional virtues? Is there literary value to the course as we teach it? How should it be taught? By textual analysis? By appeals to relevance? By all these and many more ways to meet each student's need to see the Bible as a literary experience.

Have we really thought through what a literary experience is? Is the ability to have a literary experience a kind of skill? How does it feel? What do we think about when we are having it? What happens to us when we have

one? Is it the same for everyone? If not, does it have many varieties but some identifiable common elements? Do we make sure that every method we use makes a literary experience—whatever we decide it is—happen to each student? How do we monitor the presence of a literary experience, if we give only paper and pencil tests, whether they be “objective” (that usually means easy to grade) or “subjective?” Are there outcomes of the literary experience, very important to monitor, for whose measurement we have to devise more sensitive instruments? How much do we use tests as motivation, and how destructive is this kind of motivation to the literary experience?

A classic does not become a classic because it is dull, irrelevant to man and his life, and difficult to read, understand, or accept. It becomes a classic because the issues it raises are recognizably related to the way things are, because it places those issues in a new context, because it throws a new light on old realities, or gives a unique meaning to reality. In short, it provides a literary experience.

The credibility of English as a discipline that can be taught has fallen into disrepute. Teachers of English themselves have shown their own disaffection or lack of faith in it when they found it more attractive to teach literature as sociology or psychology than as literary experience. And yet this teaching is not completely illegitimate, for to the greatest litterateurs of all time, the ancient Greeks, their literature was their mythology, their science, their psychology, their religion, their sociology, and their history.

Perhaps we have not perceived clearly enough the inextricable relationship between all aspects of the experience of language and the place of the literary experience within this context. What is the relationship of the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening? Have we assimilated the results of research on this question? To expect teachers who have no answers to these questions, who have never asked them, who have never wondered about them, who have never even known that the questions themselves existed—to ask these teachers to create and teach their own course plans is to ask the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

Curriculum leadership is needed from professionals who do ask these questions, who see that they must be asked and answered before decisions are made about electives. Curriculum direction must be given to keep objectives clear, to ensure that course plans are infused with skill experiences and literary materials of worth and appropriateness. Teachers must accumulate a variety of methods and ways of presenting materials that will meet the needs of many kinds of children. A coherent rationale must be developed to justify use of materials. Pupil achievement and course success must be evaluated in some coherent manner.

Social studies and science teachers manifest a lively interest in curricular reorganization of their content areas into elective programs. Emergence of this phenomenon provides a promising opportunity to initiate interdisciplinary courses which unite learning activities in the world of literature and language to the worlds of history and science. For instance, the Bicentennial Year is an ideal time to initiate a core program in American Studies,

an elective to combine American history, American literature, and science. Academically sound pursuit of such ideas, thoroughly infused with skill grounding, could help English teachers transmute the call "back to basics" into the motto, "forward to basics," as they incorporate, alive and undamaged, important curricular gains in theory and practice they have made over the past two decades of English teaching into electives of defensible academic substance.

Yes, phase electives are in trouble, but no more so than most educational activities. Education is confronted with an accountability crisis. But English teachers can confront that crisis with confidence intact that they know or can find out what to jettison and what to save and how to make past efforts prologue to future success that will be defensible to critics and productive for students.

The Napping Ease of the Nipponese

He sleeps upon his side upon the floor.

MATERIAL REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

—Elmer Brooks

The Best of Both Worlds: Basics and Electives

"Back to Basics!" seems to be the theme of many newspaper surveys, professional journal articles, new textbook advertisements, and university education department surveys. We are told the pendulum is swinging and we'd better hang on for dear life. Fortunately, that pressure has not been brought to bear upon members of the English Department at Columbus North High School. In fact, in a recent New Horizons town meeting of interested citizens to discuss future progress of Columbus, two of the recommendations for cultural growth were "to encourage more innovative teaching methods" and "to maintain superior quality of local education even if increased taxes are needed." Since North has a modified phase elective program, one might expect the hue and cry to be "Stop this progressive junk and get back to basic education!" This has not been the case because Columbus has always supported good education and demanded excellence from its teachers and because the high schools have been progressive in planning their new programs but have not discarded the proven parts of their programs that have been effective over the years.

For over 20 years North (formerly Columbus High School) has been strongly traditional but forward looking. The English program is syllabus centered, with five homogeneously grouped tracks for students, a paper-back-centered literature program, and an emphasis on grammar and usage taught through composition. The school board, supported by local industry, made English a requirement for graduation in each of the school's three years. And the schools have always enjoyed a great deal of community interest and support.

In 1972-73 when Columbus East opened with its flexible-modular open concept program, those of us who remained at North began an evaluation of our philosophy and program.

Our direction for change was determined, I believe, when I attended the NCTE Spring Institute in Detroit in 1973 and heard a brief report about the APEX program at Trenton, Michigan.¹ I ordered eight copies of their program and distributed them among members of our department and the administration. In November when another teacher and I attended the NCTE Convention in Minneapolis, we heard more about APEX and about the elective programs of other schools throughout the country. Many of these programs sounded dangerously shallow to us and had the marks of trying to climb upon a quick bandwagon to success. The programs we

brought home with us that most impressed our department were those from Sharon, Pennsylvania; Burlingame, California; and Lexington, Massachusetts, our favorite. With a grant from the local school corporation, we began our plans for a summer workshop in 1973 to prepare for the 1973-74 school year.

We set up a syllabus chairmen's workshop to make plans for renovation of our program, to write our rationale and goals, and to plan for next year's work; a sophomore workshop that revised the sophomore curriculum at every level, concentrating on grammar, composition, and literary genre; a junior workshop that wrote semester requirements for American literature, a nine or 12 week composition course, and a tentative list of electives in American literature; and a senior workshop that wrote a 12 week core English literature course and tentative list of electives with which we intended to survey student interests.

Much of what we wrote and experimented with has been dropped, but our basic philosophy has not changed. Our reasons for adopting a modified phase elective program are as valid today as when we wrote them.

We believe that a phase elective program designed for Columbus North will be advantageous because it will give the student a very personal responsibility for his own education and will afford him a number of choices to make which should create interest and motivation; it will demand depth and enrichment in each course that is offered because each course that is developed will not only have a rationale and objectives for that course but will also involve efforts to integrate instruction in language, composition, and literature so that attention to one will grow out of or accompany attention to the others; it will offer challenge and growth to teachers as well as the opportunity to specialize in areas of their strengths; with the addition of this program we feel we can better answer individual needs of our students, add exhilarating new areas of interest for students and teachers, and retain the strengths of our old program by involving core requirements along with the electives.

In our rationale we wrote:

We believe that Columbus North has a good program now; however, we also believe that revitalization is desirable. If we are to make changes, we want to be sure that we keep present strengths and provide a strong foundation for an exciting new elective program. A phase elective program written specifically for North and its student body and faculty seems most desirable at this time. We want the program to be our own—to fit our students and our school. We do not believe in change for the sake of change, but we do believe in a vital, challenging, on-going program.

We decided at this time to include neither our lowest level students (level five) nor our advanced placement students (level one) in our elective program because each of these levels already had special programs. We did, however, encourage junior and senior A.P. students to take electives in addition to their English classes. Sophomores were not included in the elective program because we believe that problems of adjustment to our three year high school are very real for sophomores and that there is a distinct maturation process that occurs in most students between the sophomore and junior years.

At the end of the summer our pilot courses were written and ready to teach. To educate our senior students about the phase elective program, we sent an explanatory handout and a booklet of course descriptions home with the students during the fall semester for them and their parents to study. Two weeks later the students registered, listing their first three choices. For the last 12 weeks of the second semester these courses were taught to seniors only. With much revamping and rewriting six of these nine courses are still in the list of electives offered this year. We wrote evaluation questionnaires for students in and teachers of the nine courses. On their questionnaires, both students and teachers responded enthusiastically, but they suggested changes in the elective process and in the electives themselves; they also suggested additional electives.

In the spring semester (1973-74), we gave an explanation sheet to senior students in preparation for their signing up for a pilot elective for the fall semester (1974-75). We emphasized that the program was designed by the Columbus North English faculty for Columbus North students, that students will support the program with the enthusiasm of the faculty because the students will be able to choose electives they wish to take and in which they believe they can succeed, that the students will be given their first choice (each student chose three electives) as often as scheduling and staffing would permit. Our explanation defined phasing as "a classification of the course work according to the difficulty and complexity of the skills and materials; phasing indicates the degree of advancement of the course work." Our courses were labeled as G (designed for college bound students who are "sufficiently capable in basic language skills that they can devote their time to fairly rapid reading of materials, in-depth study and analysis," and expository and imaginative writing); N (designed for students who intend to enter the work force upon graduation from high school and who will proceed at a more moderate rate of speed in the improvement of their reading and writing skills, and who will be more interested in materials "dealing with themes that related to problems and issues of everyday living"); and E (designed for students who have difficulty with English skills and who proceed at a very moderate rate of speed over material of a practical and contemporary nature in their efforts to improve their skills). Our explanation also indicated that several of our courses were designed for more than one phase and that students should not be reluctant to choose such multi-phase courses if they are attracted to the material. The nine course titles and their labels follow: Future Fiction (EN), Nonfiction I (EN), Media: Television and Magazines (EN), Survival (EN), Advanced Composition for the Collegebound (NG), Modern Drama (NG), Directed Readings (NG), English Literature: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (NG), and Modern European Literature (NG).

To help students make the wisest possible course selections, teachers and guidance counselors use the following information:

- G—These courses are for top achievers in English. They have A's and B's in English courses taken previously, an I.Q. of above 115, Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores

above the 75th percentile. Students who select G courses should be capable of rapid reading, skilled in in-depth analysis, imaginative and skilled in creative writing, and interested in doing independent study and research.

NG—Some courses bear this label which means the student should be fairly capable in language arts skills, probably planning to continue with some form of advanced schooling, making mostly A's and B's in English, an I.Q. above 100, and Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores above the 65th percentile.

EN—Courses labeled EN are more heavily skills-oriented and proceed slowly and with less depth than the NG courses so that skills refinement can take place. These students probably have reading and writing problems, are not planning on formal education after high school, have low grades in language arts, an I.Q. of 80-100, and scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills between the 35th and 65th percentiles.

E—Courses labeled E should be taken by students with major skills problems, low English grades, an I.Q. of 80-90, and Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores between the 10th and 35th percentiles.

When the student's choice differs from the counselors advice, the student is allowed to phase himself into the course of his choice. This practice has been followed from the beginning of the program; and while there have been some poor choices made, students have made amazingly accurate choices. The major fear, that good students would phase themselves into courses too easy for them, has not materialized.

At the conclusion of this pilot program of 12 week courses, both students and teachers responded to our questionnaire. The results were not surprising. We had offered too many high level courses, had included far too much material in each course, and needed more variety. But students and teachers liked the phase elective concept and wanted to retain the idea of using electives along with core requirements. Pleased and ready to go with our core requirements, we were in a quandary about how to find time to write enough elective courses to survey the student's preferences before the end of the school year. Since we had no released time, we did the only thing possible. We wrote 84 course descriptions, the entire department going over the descriptions time after time and trying to include specific titles of books available in paperback. We were as honest with the students as we could be about the inadequacies of our elective booklet, but they went along with the process of making choices, knowing that we were doing the best we could under the circumstances. Over a two week period we tried to publicize our program as much as possible so that parents and students would understand what we were attempting to do for the following year. We handed out course booklets for students to read and discuss with each other, their teachers, and their parents; we met frequently with administrators, counselors, AV and library personnel, and each other; we held an open house for parents at which we distributed handouts and presented overlays; we held an orientation meeting for in-coming sophomores and their parents, providing information and answering questions about the program; we got excellent coverage by our local newspaper (*Republic*), radio station (WCSI), and television station.

When the intensive two week education process was completed, we surveyed the choices of all students who would be juniors and seniors in the 1974-75 school year. Of our 84 offerings, the students opted for 21 six week electives: *The Strange Twist* (NG), *Interracial Marriage* (N), *Youth in Battle* (NG), *The American Indian—Myth and Reality* (NG), *From This Day Forward* (EN), *Death in Life* (NG), *The Intolerant Mob* (NG), *Youth and Law* (NG), *The Extraordinary Man* (G), *Love and Sacrifice* (EN), *Teachers and Students* (EN), *Bradbury and Friends* (NG), *Utopias* (N), *Steinbeck's Losers* (NG), *The Noble Fool* (NG), *Myths of the Old West* (EN), *Cloak and Dagger* (N), *Simple Techniques for the Improvement of Reading, Writing, and Vocabulary* (EN), *Creative Writing* (NG), and *Writing the Research Paper* (NG); five 12 week electives: *Public Speaking* (NG), *Photo-Journalism* (NG), *Future Fiction* (EN), *Media* (EN), and *Directed Reading* (NG); and seven 18 week electives: *Modern Literature I* (G), *Modern Literature II* (G), *Business English* (NG), *Industrial English* (EN), *Log Editors* (yearbook) (NG), *Triangle Editors* (newspaper) (NG), *Photography* (ENG), the last three not being for English department credit.

The following summer, with a grant from the Columbus Foundation and matching funds from the school corporation, the department had a one week intensive workshop to write these courses, every English teacher involved in writing at least three courses and some meeting with four or five groups. Our resource center aide, librarian, and AV coordinator worked with us so that our audio visual recommendations, bibliographies, and course typing could be completed within the week. We accomplished most of the work, turned in a huge book order, and staggered out of the building.

Although we had very difficult schedules, the year went amazingly well. Typically, a teacher had a preparation period, a period of resource center duty, and four classes from the electives. I have just enumerated for each six week period. But in spite of the work load and the multiple preparations each day, almost all of the staff found the program exciting and challenging. As one man said, "It's a cinch you can't get bored around here! I wouldn't go back to the old way for anything." There were others who weren't quite so enthusiastic about four different preparations, but if they were to get their choice of courses, four preparations were sometimes necessary.

Our spring evaluation, based on our questionnaire, caused us to again rewrite our course description booklet and to be still more specific about course requirements and books. In our survey we offered 41 choices, 37 of which were elected. The six week electives were *Extraordinary Man* and *Satire* (both G); *Bradbury and Friends*, *Hemingway Code Hero*, *Steinbeck's Losers*, *Strange Twist*, *Noble Fool*, *Creative Writing*, *Research Paper*, *Youth in Battle*, *Death in Life*, *Intolerant Mob*, *Another Dose of Grammar*, and *Basic Drama and Acting* (all NG); *Utopias*, *Mysterious Women in Literature*, *Cloak and Dagger*, *How Humans Survive*, *Humor in Literature*, *Indiana Literature* (all N); *Future Fiction*, *From This Day Forward*, *Love and Sacrifice*, *Teachers and Students*, *Simple Techniques*, and *Heading on*

Your Own (all EN); and Getting into the Act and Opening the Door to Self (both E). The 12 week courses were Advanced Composition, Modern European Literature, Directed Reading, and Public Speaking (all NG); and Industrial English and Media (both EN). The 18 week courses were Modern Literature I and Modern Literature II (both G); Business English, Log, Triangle, and Journalism (all NG); and Photography (ENG).

At the time we wrote our original phase elective rationale, we recommended that the school board institute a nine week grading period. The school board chose to remain on a six week grading period but in 1975 reversed itself, thus requiring that we again re-write our program. During the October Teachers' Institute the entire English department met to re-write each of our electives and to make major decisions on the length of core requirements.

These changes appeared in our booklet of course selections for 1976-77. We offered 35 nine week electives, of which 28 were chosen, and seven 18 week electives, each of which was chosen. In the past, scheduling has been our big "bug-a-boo," and it has been complicated by the fact that our social studies department has moved to an elective program, too. This past summer, however, we received 99 per cent scheduling success from our computer. That is, 99 per cent of our students are supposedly getting their choice of programs.

Under our 1976-77 Modified Phase Elective Program, our sophomores, grouped homogeneously, proceed along five tracks devoted to traditional English—grammar, composition, and literary genres. Our juniors take one nine week core requirement (either NG or EN) and one nine week elective during the first semester and an 18 week core requirement in American Literature (either NG or EN) during the second semester. Our seniors take a nine week core requirement in British Masterpieces (NG) or English Survey (EN) and two nine week or one 18 week elective during the second semester. Advanced Placement and level five English classes are scheduled for those special students each semester of all three years.

Our nine week electives are *Satire* (G); *Bradbury and Friends*, *Hemingway Code Hero*, *Steinbeck's Losers*, *Strange Town*, *Noble Pool*, *Creative Writing*, *Public Speaking*, *American Indian*, *Directed Reading*, *Research Paper*, *Death in Life*, *Intolerant Mob*, *Another Dose of Grammar*, and *Advanced Composition* (all NG); *Humor*, *Utopias*, *How Humans Survive*, *Cloak and Dagger* (all N); *Teachers and Students*, *Future Fiction*, *Romance to Reality*, *Simple Techniques of Reading, Writing, and Vocabulary*, *Basic Drama and Acting*, *Industrial English*, *Cowboys*, *Reading on Your Own* (all EN); and *Opening the Door to You, Yourself, and Others* (E). Our 18 week electives are *Modern Literature I* and *Modern Literature II* (both G); *Business English*, *Journalism*, *Log*, and *Triangle* (all NG); and *Photography* (ENG).

Several problems have been especially difficult to solve through these last three years. One was how to deal with credits and grades. We in the department had intended to have each course count its own credit and its

own grade, but the administration and guidance department chairman insisted that we average these grades for each semester. Averaging was so chaotic that the administration concluded that each course must count its own credit and grade. Core courses must be passed for graduation; therefore, if a student fails and must repeat a core course, he is able to take fewer electives. We believe this policy has been an incentive for students to work harder to pass core courses. The average teacher load for 1976-77 will be 128 students in four classes; however, some of our teachers may have as many as 150 students because the computer cannot always balance elective classes. When the guidance department foresees problems with class loads, we run a T day (trial day) of abbreviated English classes that are scheduled for the next grading period. This way we can work ahead of time to balance class loads and not lose valuable class time at the beginning of new courses. As we grow more and more experienced with this program we have fewer problems, of course.

In preparing our program we read and re-read George Hillocks Jr.'s *Alternatives in English: A Critical Appraisal of Elective Programs* (ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communications Skills, NCTE, November, 1972). We concur when he writes:

The fact that underlying assumptions of traditional programs were never examined is, in large part, responsible for their failure. That elective programs should and do "meet the interests, needs, and abilities" of the students; that teachers should specialize or teach their particular interests; that it is better for students to have short courses with several different teachers; that the choice of courses, in and of itself, will have a meaningful, positive effect on both affective and cognitive responses; that learning should be the learner's responsibility; that an elective program overcomes the weaknesses of traditional programs—all of these assumptions and others need to be examined in view of the programs that are based upon them, and the examination should be a continuing process. The validity of assumptions upon which elective programs are built should be periodically reexamined and reevaluated. (*Alternatives in English*, p. 96)

Since we intend that such continuous evaluation and examination be a large part of our effort in writing and teaching our Modified Phase Elective Program, we use the following evaluative data to indicate the degree to which our program is achieving its stated purposes: annual core and elective evaluation questionnaires (designed, written, and administered by the department) for both students and teachers; syllabus chairman's meetings; syllabus meetings for each course; department meetings for deciding what to offer, retain, change, or add; local, state, and national competitions in writing and speaking; analysis of English grades for each grading period; teacher-made tests and examinations; follow-up studies; student performance on national Advance Placement Tests in English; feedback from parents, counselors, and students; and North Central evaluation.

We are constantly gaining encouragement. There has been a noticeable increase of interest in reading because of the student's right to choose his courses, a careful selection of interesting and varied books for each course, and the thematic nature of most of the electives. Teachers are commenting

that they see improvement in writing and they credit this to our sequential program and intensive composition core. A recent trip to Trenton, Michigan, added strength to our belief in our program. The department chairman at Trenton said that because of student pressure his department was considering adding core requirements to their APEX program. He encouraged us in our direction and seemed to think we were writing a strong program.

I don't mean to imply that any great wave of perfection has washed over the members of North's English Department, for several major concerns threaten our program, one being the unbelievable increase in the cost of paperback books. Such increases may force us back to hardback anthologies (heaven forbid!). Talk is also rampant that we may be moving back to four year high schools (heaven again forbid!). Such a move would mean a major revision of our program, the fourth since we began our phase electives effort. A third problem is that we have no reading lab, and we need one, for among our 1,650 students there are some who can barely read and write and some who have little interest in any program we adopt.

On the positive side, we have had a strong department for many years and a good program. We have a fine library and a wonderfully helpful librarian. While our audio visual equipment is not what we'd like or as much as we'd like, our AV director manages very well and is always helping us with ideas for innovative projects. We have a well-equipped resource center that serves as a small English Department library, operated by a capable, helpful aide. The sophomore, junior, and senior syllabus chairmen are tireless in their efforts to direct, write, and re-write the core courses and to conduct frequent syllabus meetings. Our department members are hard working, persevering professionals who have faced and surmounted all kinds of problems in the last four years. We have become a rather close-knit group working to develop a program in which we believe. With our new program we are still giving our students a strong basic background in English, but we are doing so in a much more exciting and challenging way for students and teachers.

NOTES

¹APEX, *A Nongraded Phase Elective English Curriculum*, 3rd ed., USOE Project 661691 (Trenton, Michigan, 1968).

A Student Opinionnaire to Assess Attitudes Toward the English Phase Elective Curriculum

Theoretical Framework. One curriculum issue which has attracted much professional comment, but little analysis, is the phase elective curriculum. Originally introduced in English, the elective organization has intrigued social studies, mathematics, and science curriculum planners. A phase elective may be thought of as a special topic in the curriculum. The elective usually covers nine to 12 weeks of intensive study rather than the 36 to 40 weeks course. The placement of topics in difficulty or interest levels constitutes the phase structure; the choosing of topics by the students, with appropriate counseling, is the elective component of the phase elective curriculum.

Description of variations of this pattern for the English curriculum and anecdotal evidence of phase elective effectiveness are discussed in Murphy (1965), Carlsen (1968), Ohme (1970), Bronson (1971), Morton and Dei Dolori (1971), Van Riper (1971), Smith (1971), Shuman (1971), McCormic and Kaupp (1972), Rounds (1972), Stern (1972), Steirer (1973), Williams (1973), Dupuis (1974), and Vaughn and Curtis (1975). But descriptions and anecdotal reporting indicate that more controlled empirical evidence seems necessary to support the claim that phase elective curricula will change student attitudes and improve student skills in the English classroom or in any classroom.

In order to document the effectiveness of the phase elective organization for a curriculum several aspects of that curriculum need evaluation: (1) the objectives of the curriculum—change in student skills in a discipline; change in student attitudes; change in student knowledge; (2) the support for the curriculum—teacher attitudes and competencies; administrative attitudes; and patron (parents, taxpayers, school boards, the community) attitudes. To evaluate successfully, there must be a curriculum of reasoned, interesting electives which lead to the development of skills and attitudes.

Objectives of the Opinionnaire. The objectives for the present opinionnaire were based on the comments of teachers, administrators, and students. Some of the statements were taken directly from a published attitude scale (Estes, 1975), but most were selected statements dealing with concerns of the school. Eight clusters of statements were identified as important issues.

Attitudes toward composition and writing were measured by these statements: (3) Writing papers for English class is good practice; (10) Writing stories or poems is a pleasure; (22) I need to learn to write better; and (26)* Composition electives are *too* hard. Only one (26) is judged to be a negative eliciting statement so that the appropriate attitude response is for the student to disagree strongly with the statement. Notice that a range of writing is sampled in the statements. Attitudes toward analytical as well as creative writings can be inferred from statements three and ten, and a judgment of the student's own skills is called for in 22. Sampling various attitudes is important in the development of an evaluation scale or opinionnaire.

Likewise the other clusters were developed. A general attitude toward literature was sampled in the following items, where 16 is a negative eliciting statement: (7) Knowing about meter and rhyme leads to deeper understanding of poetry; (13) Most literature is interesting; (16)* Most literature is dull. Attitudes toward language study and the teacher are two other areas where some knowledge of students' feelings may be important indications of self-motivating or self-inhibiting behaviors affecting learning. Language: (14)* The study of grammar is useless; (25) Language electives are exciting. Item 14 is a negative eliciting statement. Teacher: (27) I chose an elective English course based on the teacher; (32) My English teacher is interested in me; (33) My English teacher helps me find books, plays, and poetry which I enjoy. Item 35 in this cluster is a negative eliciting statement. This cluster concerning the teacher may serve an additional purpose of evaluating the behavior of teachers. This seems especially true in items 33, 34, 35, and 39.

Part of measuring or identifying attitudes must invariably be self-diagnostic. For that reason a number of items are clustered about the statements relating to identifying self-needs. These self-assessment items include the following statements: Those with an asterisk are considered negative eliciting statements. (15) Students should be required to take English every year; (21) I need to learn to read better; (22) I need to learn to write better; (23) I have learned more English this year than I did last year; (24)* I am not in the correct phase; (28) I chose an elective English course based on my interest in the subject; (29) I need to learn to speak/discuss better; (30) I need to learn to listen better; (40) I am ready to get a job and use what I have learned in English class to enjoy plays, movies, books, magazines, or television; (41) I am ready to get a job and use what I have learned in English class to help other people; (45) I think my friends feel that English class is fun; (46) I am ready to go to a junior college, college, or university and do well in English; (47)* I think my friends feel that what they study in English is *too* difficult for them; (48)* I feel that what I study in English class is *too* difficult for me; (49) I think my friends feel that English class has helped them prepare for life outside of high school; and (50) My English elective courses have helped me find plays, books, movies, or poetry which I understand and enjoy.

Notice, however, that item 22 appears under the composition heading. This overlap reduces the effectiveness of establishing a statistically sound factor analysis but may provide the classroom teacher with pertinent information.

The attitudes expressed relating to other courses are important in assessing or inferring the student's feeling toward school. While this overall feeling should be tapped in one area, and the Phase Elective Opinionnaire attempts to accomplish this end, the Estes Attitude Scales are probably more suited to an overall assessment of attitude. The Scales assess attitudes toward English, social studies, science, mathematics, and reading. In the opinionnaire, items 1, 9, and 31 reflect attitudes concerning other courses. (1) Work in English class helps students do better work in other classes (9) Studying English is less tiring than studying other subjects; and (31) My English class helps me in thinking about other subjects. The English class is set in the most favorable position in each of these statements. An interest or study habits inventory would be an appropriate follow-up assessment activity if a negative response is recorded.

The other areas that are of concern are general feelings about English and specific feelings about phase elective English. Sixteen items are samples of student statements about English. Not surprisingly, perhaps, there are more negative eliciting statements than positive, but in sampling students, their tendency was to respond negatively, as predicted. Most teachers interpret this as the difference between showing off—making the verbal statement—and responding honestly to the opinionnaire statement. The statements taken to reflect a general feeling toward English are: (2)* The study of English is a waste of time; (4)* Almost any subject is better than English; (5)* English courses are some of the worst courses; (6) The study of great books is necessary for a good education; (8)* English is a subject with very little real value; (11) Studying English in college would be valuable; (12)* English is boring; (17) English is fun; (18) Time spent in English class is time well spent; (19) English class is too short; (20)* English is one class I can do without; (36)* There is too much reading in English class; (37)* I think my friends feel that English class is boring; (38) My English class helps me use language to say what I really want to say (write); and (47)* I think my friends feel that what they study in English is *too* difficult for them.

The statements reflecting students' attitudes toward phase electives include: (23) I have learned more English this year than I did last year; (24)* I am not in the correct phase; (25) Language electives are exciting; (26)* Composition electives are *too* hard; (27) I chose an elective English course based on the teacher; (28) I chose an elective English course based on my interest in the subject; (42)* I have learned less English this year than I did last year; (43)* My English classes this year are more demanding than was my English class last year; (44) My English class now is more exciting than

my English class was last year; and (50) My English elective courses have helped me find plays, books, movies, or poetry which I understand and enjoy.

Scoring. The opinionnaire can be reproduced or items can be selected from it, and an answer sheet should be designed for easy response and scoring. The answer sheet should allow for five possible reactions to each statement:

- 5—"I strongly agree"
- 4—"I agree"
- 3—"I am undecided"
- 2—"I disagree"
- 1—"I strongly disagree"

The opinionnaire and the answer sheet should be distributed to the students without specific instructions, but with an admonition to answer honestly or a brief reminder to respond using the numbers in the appropriate answer areas.

Negative eliciting responses should be rescored by the teacher after the opinionnaire is completed for ease of summing the scoring. To achieve a positive score the "I strongly disagree" response to a negative eliciting statement would receive a "5" and so on down to "I strongly agree," which would receive a "1". Adding the scores of each response will result in subtotals for each of the clusters desired and a total summated score for the opinionnaire.

Interpreting the Response Scores. While the purpose of the opinionnaire is to determine students' attitudes to phase elective English, it is also useful in gauging students' attitudes toward various aspects of the English curriculum. Based on a two year project with over 2000 high school students, the following categories seem appropriate for each cluster area.

Cluster 1—Composition and Writing

Strongly Positive — 16 or higher

Positive — 15-10

Negative — 9 or lower

Cluster 2—Literature

Strongly Positive — 14 or higher

Positive — 13-8

Negative — 7 or lower

Cluster 3—Language

Strongly Positive — 10 or higher

Positive — 9-4

Negative — 3 or lower

Cluster 4—Teacher

Strongly Positive — 23 or higher

Positive — 22-12

Negative — 11 or lower

Cluster 5—Self

Strongly Positive — 52 or higher

Positive — 51-37

Negative — 36 or lower

Cluster 6—Other Classes

Strongly Positive — 13 or higher

Positive — 12-7

Negative — 6 or lower

Cluster 7—Attitude toward English

Strongly Positive — 61 or higher

Positive — 60-40

Negative — 39 or lower

Cluster 8—Attitude Toward Phase Elective

Strongly Positive — 39 or higher

Positive — 38-27

Negative — 26 or lower

Cluster 9—Total Summated Attitude Score

Strongly Positive — 181 or higher (total possible 250)

Positive — 180-134

Negative — 133 or lower

This opinionnaire is in its research form, but many teachers who have used it, reacted to it, and had students react to it have found it practical. Measuring students' attitudes and attitude change is a useful assessment of course impact, teacher activity, student self-assessment, or the worthiness of a curriculum innovation. Attitudes and opinions need to be weighed with cognitive evidence and with economic, administrative, and other considerations, but the results of attitude assessment are worthwhile in evaluating student progress and curriculum developments.

5 will mean "I strongly agree"

4 will mean "I agree"

3 will mean "I am undecided"

2 will mean "I disagree"

1 will mean "I strongly disagree"

Student Opinionnaire Concerning English.

1. Work in English class helps students do better work in other classes.
2. The study of English is a waste of time.
3. Writing papers for English class is good practice.
4. Almost any subject is better than English.
5. English courses are some of the worst courses.
6. The study of great books is necessary for a good education.
7. Knowing about meter and rhyme leads to deeper understanding of poetry.
8. English is a subject with very little real value.
9. Studying English is less tiring than studying other subjects.
10. Writing stories or poems is a pleasure.

11. Studying English in college would be valuable.
12. English is boring.
13. Most literature is interesting.
14. The study of grammar is useless.
15. Students should be required to take English every year.
16. Most literature is dull.
17. English is fun.
18. Time spent in English class is time well spent.
19. English class is too short.
20. English is one class I can do without.
21. I need to learn to read better.
22. I need to learn to write better.
23. I have learned more English this year than I did last year.
24. I am not in the correct phase.
25. Language electives are exciting.
26. Composition electives are *too* hard.
27. I chose an elective English course based on the teacher.
28. I chose an elective English course based on my interest in the subject.
29. I need to learn to speak/discuss better.
30. I need to learn to listen better.
31. My English class helps me in thinking about other subjects.
32. My English teacher is interested in me.
33. My English teacher knows my interests.
34. My English teacher knows my abilities.
35. There is not enough time for me to talk to my English teacher.
36. There is too much reading in English class.
37. I think my friends feel that English class is boring.
38. My English class helps me use language to say what I really want to say (write).
39. My English teacher helps me find books, plays, and poetry which I enjoy.
40. I am ready to get a job and use what I have learned in English class to enjoy plays, movies, books, magazines, or television.
41. I am ready to get a job and use what I have learned in English class to help other people.
42. I have learned less English this year than I did last year.
43. My English classes this year are more demanding than was my English class last year.
44. My English class now is more exciting than my English class was last year.
45. I think my friends feel that English class is fun.
46. I am ready to go to a junior college, college, or university and do well in English.
47. I think my friends feel that what they study in English is *too* difficult for them.
48. I feel that what I study in English class is *too* difficult for me.
49. I think my friends feel that English class has helped them prepare for life outside of high school.
50. My English elective courses have helped me find plays, books, movies, or poetry which I understand and enjoy.

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NOTES

All items marked with an asterisk are negative eliciting items.

On Reading Xaviera and the Watergate Confessions

Time was the press knew righteous rage;

MATERIAL REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

—Elmer Brooks

Minicourse Media: Filmstrip Sets at the Elementary School Level

Bilingual Reading Child, 1975, BFA Educational Media, 2211 Michigan Avenue, Santa Monica, California 90404, four color strips with disc \$61, or cassette \$69, grades 1-4, teacher's guide/20 reproducible skill masters/20 activity cards. Children would enjoy using this series whether they speak Spanish as their first language or are learning Spanish as a second language. The activity cards are printed in both English and Spanish, and the strips' narrations contain both English and Spanish. This set could be used by older children as a mini lesson of the various Spanish cultures in the United States since Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Mexican American children are portrayed in realistic everyday adventures. It would also be a valuable kit to use with primary aged Spanish speaking children who are having trouble reading and do not enjoy school because of language difficulties.

Elementary Economics: Choices and Values, 1974, BFA Educational Media, six color strips with disc \$78, with cassette \$90, grds. 3-7, teacher's guide. Budgeting, careers, shopping, taxes, environment, and resources are all summarized in this series. The information is presented in an informal narrative. The set would be good for students to use individually since the audio contains many direct questions. Students are not given absolute answers to the questions, but solutions are suggested. *Elementary Economics* is a good introduction to money, budgeting, and wise use of resources for older children.

Elementary Science, 1974, ACI Films, 35 West 45th Street, New York, New York 10036, four filmstrip sets each with five color strips and cassettes \$290, grds. 5-7, teacher's guide. This science program has been designed for students to use independently or in small groups. It clearly explains basic science theories about simple machines, electricity, magnetism, and heat, and then applies this to known practical uses. The teacher's guide includes a short bibliography of related books. The colorful photos and clear, easily understood narration are well coordinated.

Family Values, 1974, Scholastic Book Services, 904 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632, one color strip with disc or cassette \$24.50, grds. 3-6, teacher's guide/16 activity-skill cards with two mini lessons/one game photo pack with 16 photos. Although the filmstrip and recording is really little more than a funny introduction to the topic, it contains a catchy song that will create an interest in this kit. Once students have previewed the strip, they can easily use the activity/skill cards and lessons on their own. The unit discusses the socio-economic make up of families, points out that customs vary from group to

group, and shows familiar variances of family life styles caused by divorces, foster children, etc. The teacher's guide is invaluable to the teacher who is in a rush but wants a well planned unit on families. The Write Soon game is not only a learning experience about children in other lands, but is also a great way to introduce letter writing techniques to children.

First Ideas About Animals, 1975, BFA Educational Media, four color strips with disc \$63 or cassette \$71, grds. 3-7, teacher's guides/four learner's guides/40 activity cards/reproduction masters. Excellent color photographs have been combined with good narration and music to create an interesting, worthwhile kit on animals. The activity cards have good ideas and would be valuable classroom activities. However, because each strip has a pretest and a post test, a child could use the filmstrip series on his own. The series discusses animal groups, adaptations, interrelationships and interdependence, and evolution.

The Jamestown Adventure, 1975, Troll Associates, 320 Route 17, Mahwah, New Jersey 07430, four color strips with cassette \$44, grds. 4-8, teacher's guide. Children could get a real understanding of the early Jamestown settlement if they used this series. The narration is good, and the illustrations well chosen. The script makes use of diary accounts and adequately explains the settlers' early Indian relationships. Tobacco's importance is discussed throughout the strips.

Language Builders, 1975, Educational Dimensions Group, Box 126, Stamford, Connecticut 06904, six color strips with cassette \$135, grds. 1-6, teacher's guide. Similar in approach to the skits on the children's television shows Sesame Street and The Electric Company, *Language Builders* uses visual explanations of oral communication to reinforce the ideas presented. It is an especially valuable tool to use in grades four and five because of its approach. Each filmstrip builds upon the information presented in the others. The series covers the parts of speech, nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and prepositions. Good basic grammar instruction.

Giving Metric: The Metric Olympics, 1974, Scholastic Book Services, one color strip with disc or cassette \$24.50, grds. 4-6, teacher's guide/wall chart/16 activity-skill cards with 32 mini lessons/game/eight spirit masters. The introductory tape and strip is designed to encourage the student's interest in the metric system and is not a learning device in itself. But the rest of the kit is a well planned, valuable learning experience. Students in the sixth grade could use this as a phase elective; younger children would gain much by using it in small groups. The card game will help children learn how to convert, and the wall chart is a large reminder of the metric measurements. Metric history, a bibliography of books to use on the subject, and a unit review are all found in the teacher's guide.

Our Animal Tree, 1975, Coronet, 65 East South Water Street, Chicago, Illinois 60601, four color strips with disc \$38 or cassette \$49, grds. 1-3, teacher's guide. Robins, squirrels, and woodpeckers are introduced to young children in this colorful set. The narrator discusses physical characteristics and sex and social behavior. Young children can enjoy watching this series on their own while learning how to observe animals and birds in their own backyard. A good beginning ecology lesson.

Poetry and Me, 1974, Coronet, four color strips with disc \$38 or cassette \$51, grds. 1-4, teacher's guide. This set's casual, easy manner will help children see that

poetry relates to their experiences. The sound is good and is varied. There are both male and female narrators; the music is melodious and does not detract. Real life pictures of children five to eight years old are well coordinated with the script. The only drawback of the series is that no credit is given for poems used. Younger children will not mind this and may be encouraged to write their own poetry after viewing all four strips.

The Reading Child—How Do I Know What I Know?, 1974, BFA Educational Media, four color strips with disc \$52 or cassette \$60, grds. 1-3, teacher's guide. Each strip has a different visual format in this series. "Asking Questions" contains attractive illustrations of animals made from pine cones and discusses how to gather information and create a simple chart. "Experiencing" uses photos of four children experiencing various kinds of windy days. "Listening" uses photos to discuss how we choose the right sound with the right object. "Looking" is illustrated with a combination of cartoonish drawings and nature photos. Since all the strips except "Listening" have captions, children could use the rest of the set as a reading experience without the tapes.

Write Now Wordshop, 1974, Guidance Associates, 757 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10017, five filmstrip sets each with two color strips and disc or cassette \$242.50, grds. 4-6, teacher's guides/student activity cards. Although this seems like an expensive total package, it is an excellent way to build on the child's imagination. Each set contains good follow-up activities that will stimulate creativity. Vocabulary is given in the teacher's guide and is available to the student. The series discusses how to look at things creatively, how to interpret sound, how to express one's feelings, and how to write in an organized, vivid way.

Minicourse Media: Filmstrip Sets at the Secondary Level

American Folk Art, 1975, Troll Associates, 320 Route 17, Mahway, New Jersey 07430, eight color strips with cassette \$128, grds. 5-10, teacher's guide. The folk art of white Americans is examined in this set as it discusses early artistic endeavors. Photographs of various art objects are used to discuss the uses and creations of these stylistic techniques. Students in an art class could use this kit on their own to gain an appreciation for folk art techniques. The set discusses weathervanes, whiliggs, early toys, scrimshaw, household crafts, sculpture, oil painting, and documentary art.

The Challenge of Change, 1974, QED Productions, Box 1608, Burbank, California 91507, six color strips with disc \$98.50, grds. 7-college, teacher's guide. This set is best used as a phase elective with bright students in history or social studies. The teacher's guide is overfilled with good student activities. Based upon the developments of a particular region in Southwest Colorado, the series shows how economic and cultural changes have caused family life to change. The set ends with a strip called "The Challenge of the Future" and allows the students to project themselves into possible future changes.

Change Here For Tomorrow, 1974, Doubleday Multimedia, Box 11607, 1371 Reynolds Avenue, Santa Ana, California 92705, four color strips with disc or cassette \$82.50, grds. 6-10, teacher's guide. Excellent for high school social studies students, this unit uses real photos of teens to pursue the future of family, leisure, work, and people. One strip deals realistically with the treatment of old age and loneliness. The overall presentation may date as some of the daily problems concerning the future of the family, or work, and of leisure are answered. Nevertheless, it should be extremely up-to-date and useful with young adults during the seventies.

Chinese Tales, 1974, Schloat Productions, 150 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York 10591, four color strips with cassette \$78, grds. 7-12, teacher's guide. Older students viewing this series should understand how mythology affects man's lifestyle. Each of the four Chinese tales is illustrated with stylized, tight illustrations and is used to introduce young adults to related customs, holidays, or arts. The follow-up contains real photographs which help explain the social custom illustrated. The set does discuss the differences between Mainland China and the People's Republic.

Ecology: A Study of Resources, 1974, QED Productions, six color strips with disc \$110.50 or cassette \$122.50, grds. 7-12, teacher's guide. The excellent teacher's

guide for this set contains vocabulary, discussion questions, and suggested classroom projects. The scripts used are well written, and the visuals well coordinated. This series explains current energy resources, problems in energy usage, and the need for a different tomorrow. Consultants include a Ph.D. geologist, an electric power researcher, and an engineer. The set is extremely timely since it probes the moral and ethical questions currently facing us in the energy crisis.

Equality: A Look at "The Dream", 1975, Prentice-Hall Media, 150 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York 10591, two color and black and white strips with disc or cassette \$49, grds. 9-12, teacher's guide. This very positive presentation of the Black movement uses Black leaders such as Martin Luther King to discuss Black problems in America. The audio is very clear; the clear narration is aided by good background. This series does not show the bad aspects of the slums, such as drug abuse. But it does represent modern Black leaders in a positive way, and presents the recorded words of such leaders as Charles Evers, Jesse Jackson, and Maynard Jackson for young people to hear. The general theme is that politics and law are today's ways to bring change and to create an equal modern society for Blacks.

George Washington, 1975, Coronet, 65 East South Water Street, Chicago, Illinois 60601, four color strips with disc \$51 or cassette \$56, grds. 6-up, teacher's guide. The extensive use of quotes from letters, documents, diaries, and speeches makes this an impressive set to use with high school aged students. Because the set shows Washington's weaknesses as well as his strengths, it is good to use when studying the characteristics of military and political leaders. The set also discusses other important men of the time such as Adams and Hancock.

How To Use a Library, 1974, United Learning, 6633 West Howard Street, Niles, Illinois 60648, four color strips with disc \$42 or cassette \$48, grds. 9-12, script book. The card catalog, book collection, records, newspapers, and periodicals are adequately described in this set. Students can gain insight on available reference materials and audio visual materials available by using the strips. The series can easily be used by any high school student as a basic introduction to the library.

Indians of North America, 1973, National Geographic Society, 17th and M Streets, Washington, D.C. 20036, five color strips with disc or cassette \$67.50, grds. 7-12, teacher's guide/map. This series uses artifacts, paintings, and photographs of actual places in North America to show that American Indian culture was well developed before white people arrived. The series does not generalize; it shows that some of the differences between regional areas affected tribal customs and lifestyles. It also explains how science has helped twentieth century man to discover ancient Indian lifestyles. The large, colorful map discusses Indian history and archeological findings.

Native Arts, 1975, Encore Visual Education, 1234 Victory Boulevard, Burbank, California 91502, four color strips with cassette \$49, grds. 8-12, teacher's guide. An anthropological approach to art is used in *Native Arts*; each part involves the history of the people as well as a look at the artifacts. The series could easily be used by students on their own as an overall introduction to primitive art. Art terminology, such as abstract styles, is discussed. Groups included are the

Northwest coast Indians, South Seas peoples, and mask makers throughout the world.

Preventing Pregnancy, United Learning, six color strips with cassette \$75, grds. 8-12, teacher's guide. Young people should be allowed to pursue sex education topics as a group or on their own and will find this objective, well devised set useful. Designed by a physician and a health educator, the strips discuss the pill, the diaphragm, vaginal spermicides, the condom, tubal ligation, vasectomy, the intrauterine device, the rhythm, and the sympto-thermal methods of birth control. Accurate terminology is used; pros and cons are given for each method.

Winning/Losing: Competitive Values, 1975, Sunburst Communications, 39 Washington Avenue, Pleasantville, New York 10570, two color strips with disc or cassette \$45, grds. 7-12, teacher's guide. All high school age students should view this set and discuss the role of sports in United States society. The set explains that sports are physical exercises played for the person's enjoyment and recreation. It also discusses the historical aspects of historical sports from early days of knight-hood to today's high school football. Students viewing this series must face the question of how much an individual should give up to be a winner. A thought provoking, worthwhile set to use to stimulate discussion and thought.

Women: An American History, 1976, Encyclopedia Britannica Educational Corporation, 425 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611, six color strips with cassette \$84, grds. 7-college, teacher's guide. Dr. Anne F. Scott, Dr. Ann D. Gordon, and Dr. Mary Hotvedt have combined historical information and illustrations to create an objective filmstrip series which discusses United States women leaders, their thoughts, and the movement for women's rights. Easily used as a mini course, the set contains review questions, discussion questions, and follow-up ideas. The scripts are not preachy, but they do show the nineteenth century's restricting attitudes concerning women.

Writing: From Imagination to Expression, 1974, Guidance Associates, 757 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10017, four color strips with disc or cassette \$77.50, grds. 7-12, teacher's guide. A well produced, attractive set that will be most useful with the bright high school student. Many concepts, questions, and authors are introduced. The narration quotes from the writings of noted authors, including Franz Kafka and Ernest Hemingway. The set discusses the creative process of writing and deals with writing's practical aspects of theme, setting, plot, and characterization. A good background for creative writing.

NCTE Committee on Censorship: Request for Information

The newly formed NCTE Committee on Censorship decided, in its initial meeting at the NCTE Convention in Chicago, that one of its first tasks is to gather and to examine reports of incidents of censorship that have occurred since September 1, 1976. Not only will the committee report the incidents to members, noting censorship trends throughout the nation, but it will also examine the information carefully to help it complete six other projects of interest to members.

The committee urges teachers who have experienced any form of censorship to send reports to the chairman of the committee at the following address:

Edward Jenkinson, Director
English Curriculum Study Center
1125 Atwater Avenue
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

The committee request the following information:

1. The name and address of the school and/or school district involved and the grade level(s) involved.
2. The complete title, author, and publisher of the textbook(s) and/or trade materials objected to. Or a complete description of the ideas and/or teaching strategies objected to.
3. Who made the objection(s)? (Parent, student, teacher, administrator, clergyman, citizen's group, etc.)
To whom was the original objection made?
How was the complaint made? (Individual conference, letter, telephone call, citizen's request form, etc.)
4. Can the person making the complaint be identified with any specific group? If so, which group?
5. What was the specific complaint?
6. What action was requested by the complainant?
7. What action was taken by the school? Who made the decision of the action taken?
8. What was the direct result of the censorship complaint? (Student read another book; book was removed from reading list; book was placed on closed shelf; parts of the book were excised, etc.)
9. What were the indirect results of the censorship complaint? (Book wasn't removed from reading list but was not reordered; department quietly decided not to teach the book again; etc.)
10. Was the incident reported by the mass media? (Please enclose any available newspaper clippings with the report.)
11. Please give the name and home address of the person making the report so that a member of the committee can contact you if further information is needed.